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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 006599

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/15/2013

TAGS: KPAL IS ASEC PTER JO

SUBJECT: JORDANIANS CONDEMN BOMBING OF U.S. CONVOY IN GAZA,  
WAIT FOR U.S. REACTION

Classified By: Ambassador Edward W. Gnehm for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d)

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. (C) Jordanians expressed shock and condemnation in the immediate aftermath of the October 15 attack on a U.S. diplomatic convoy in the Gaza Strip. The GOJ strongly condemned the bombing and extended its condolences to the families of the victims. Noting that the investigation into the attack is in the early stages, some of our contacts were not convinced that official Americans were the intended target. They worried that the incident could spark a new round of violence that could, in turn, increase anti-US sentiment in Jordan. See septel for account of Embassy Amman EAC meeting. End Summary.

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GOJ REACTS STRONGLY TO THE BOMBING  
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¶2. (C) The GOJ reacted with shock and condemnation to the October 15 attack on a U.S. diplomatic convoy in Gaza. Foreign Minister Muasher's Private Office Director, Ali al-Ayed, told PolCouns just after the blast that the death of Americans in Gaza came as a complete shock. He expressed the GOJ's strong condemnation of the attack, as well as its deep condolences to the families of those killed and injured. He said he had briefed Foreign Minister Muasher (who is currently out of the country) by phone as soon as he heard about the attack, and expected Muasher to condemn it publicly at the first opportunity. Security and police sources did not expect the attack to cause unrest in Jordan.

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SOME NOT CONVINCED OFFICIAL AMERICANS WERE THE INTENDED TARGET  
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¶3. (C) Many of our contacts immediately after the bombing expressed shock at the news, but were not convinced that official Americans were the intended target. Jordanian publisher and peace process specialist Ghazi Sa'di told us that if the bombing was intended to hit Americans, this clearly was wrong since American involvement is needed for peace efforts, including monitoring activities. Former government minister and current university professor Suleiman Arabyat denounced the bombing as "shameful," especially since the convoy was going into Gaza for purely peaceful civilian purposes. He added that it benefited no one but the enemies of peace and cannot be justified.

¶4. (C) Former member of Parliament and Fatah member Hamadeh Faraneh said the bombing was very regrettable and should be condemned. Faraneh mentioned that he was with former Gaza security chief Mohammad Dahlan in Amman when Dahlan got a call informing him of the bombing. Faraneh said that Dahlan was visibly upset and said he would return to Gaza immediately, canceling an appointment in Egypt.

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OTHERS WORRY ATTACK COULD SPARK NEW ROUND OF VIOLENCE  
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¶5. (C) Director of Jordan University's Center for Strategic Studies Mustafa Hamarneh expressed shock at the news of the attack and said that if Palestinian militants were responsible, it would be a "grave development," given that the Palestinian groups had thus far confined their attacks to Israeli interests. He worried that the bombing would spark a new round of violence in the Palestinian areas that could, in turn, increase anti-American sentiment in Jordan.

¶6. (C) Jamal Talhat, fellow at the Jordanian Armed Forces staff college, says that if Palestinian militants had specifically targeted the U.S., it means that they have reached the level of "self-destruction," as it will only deepen U.S.-Israeli cooperation against them. By going after a non-Israeli non-military target, it also means that whoever was responsible has lost the distinction between legitimate resistance and terrorism.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: This initial reaction -- although skeptical

that U.S. officials could have been targeted -- is surprisingly objective, recognizing that such attacks further jeopardize the U.S. capacity to sustain peace efforts.  
GNEHM